



The President's Daily Brief

9 April 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Mrs. Bandaranaike has expressed fresh alarm over the Ceylonese insurgency, and her government is pressing its requests for foreign aid in combating it. (Page 2)

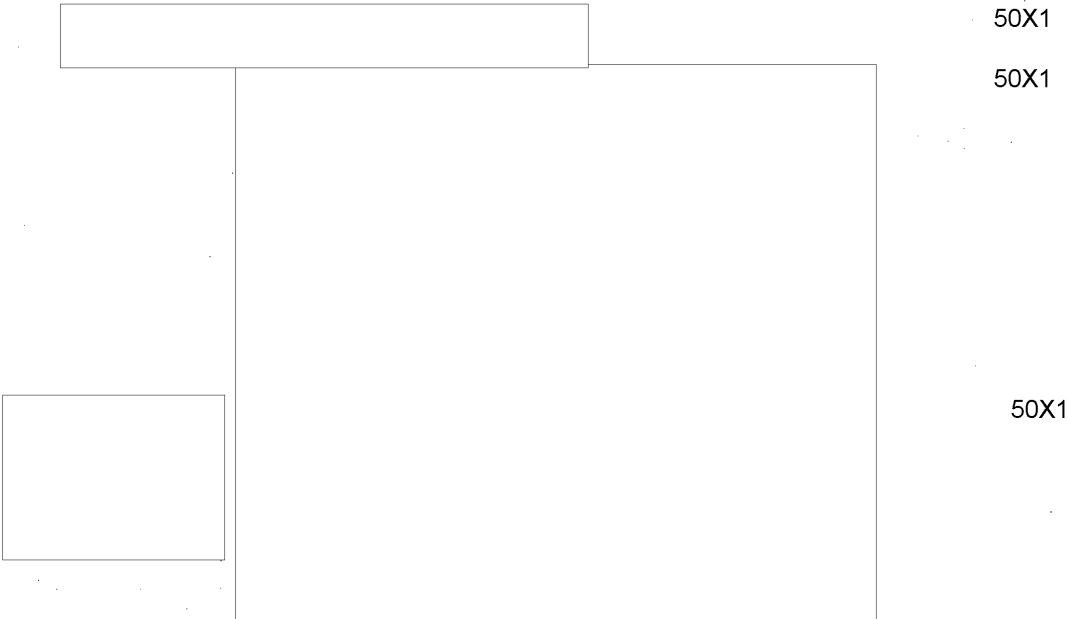
On Page 4 we report on the inconclusive fighting in East Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] at Annex we take a broader look at the import of the past two weeks' events for the future of Pakistan.

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USSR-EGYPT

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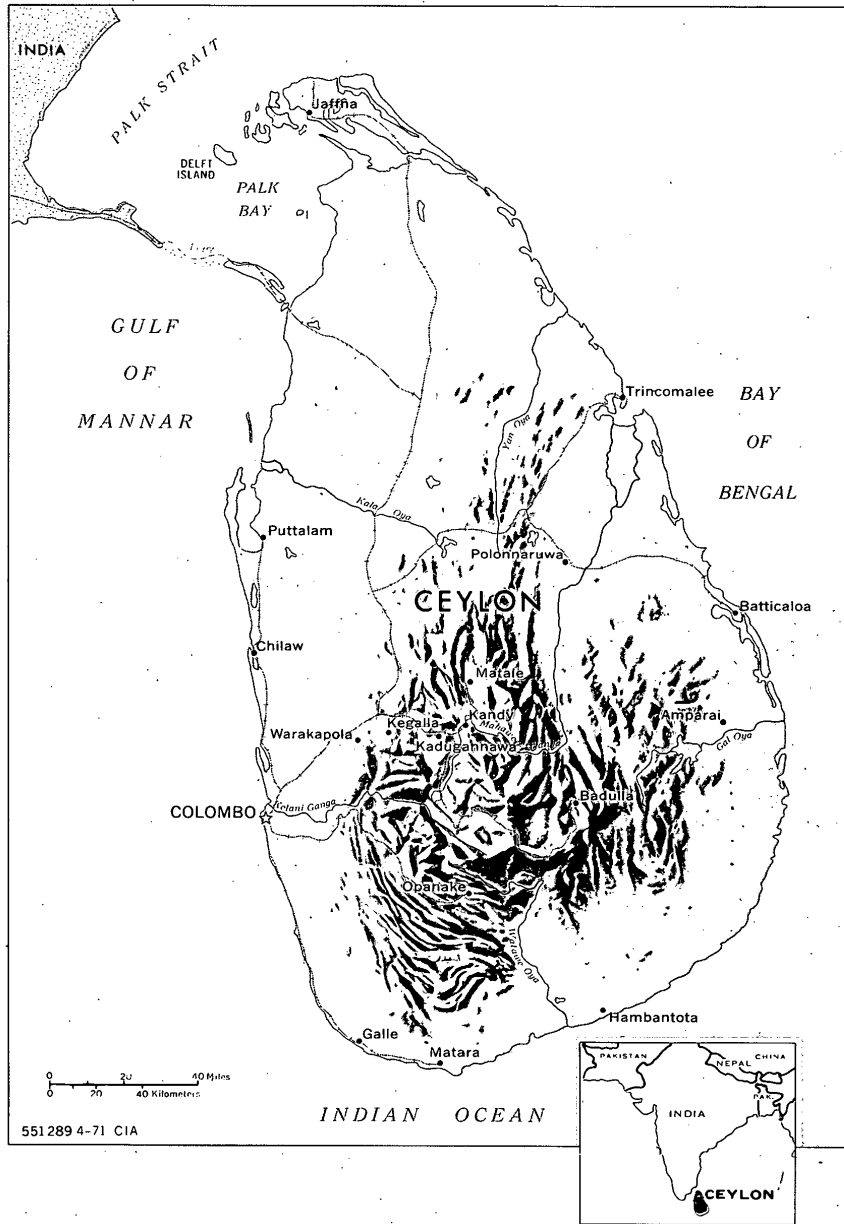
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CEYLON

High-level Ceylonese officials including Prime Minister Bandaranaike now view the government's position as "desperate." [redacted] have commented that they are dealing with a "full-blown, well-organized insurgency" and that there is no chance that the situation can be brought under control in the next few days. Mrs. Bandaranaike now claims she is up against a rebel force of from 50,000 to 100,000.

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Earlier estimates had put rebel strength at 25,000, which seems closer to the mark. So far, the rebels have concentrated their efforts in the countryside and have stayed away from the larger cities. They may be expanding their field of operations, however, as attacks now have been reported in the northern and southern reaches of the island. Police stations and personnel continue to be the prime targets of the rebels, who, according to the government, now have obtained a significant amount of rifles and automatic weapons and have gained some popular support.

The US Embassy reports that the public appears dissatisfied with the government's performance in the crisis to date. Long distance trains are not running, food distribution has been disrupted, and prices have doubled, while the government is refusing to issue any credible information on the seriousness of the situation.

The government seems to be waiting while security forces try to re-establish control rather than taking any initiatives to develop popular support for its position. [redacted]

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[redacted] the 7,000-man volunteer reserve force, which is being mobilized, is poorly trained and there is a lack of ground transport, especially the small vehicles needed to move troops into areas of insurgency. Helicopters, which are also in short supply, have become the chief means of troop transport and of locating and attacking the insurgents.

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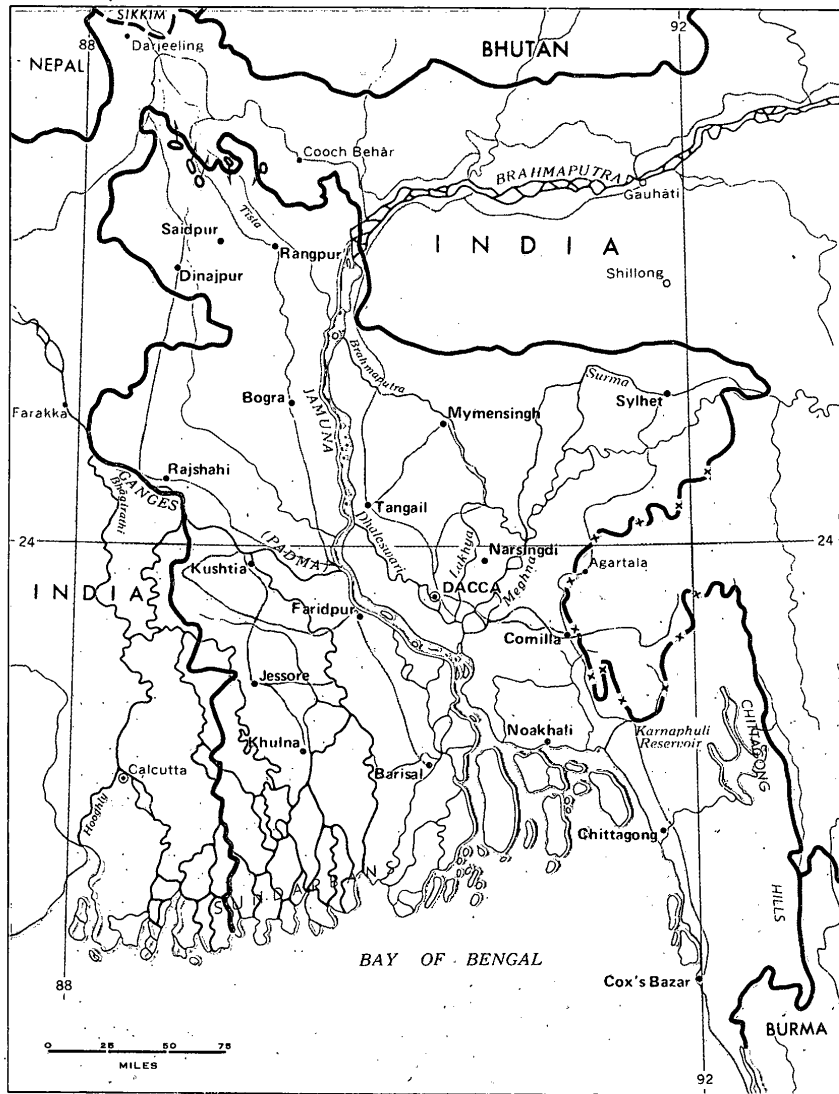
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The Ceylonese Government is still hoping to make do with its own nationals, but will ask for "personnel" from India or the United Kingdom as a last resort, [redacted] It has formally approached India and the US to furnish arms assistance, including helicopters which they say they will take as a gift, a loan, or on hire. The British, who were asked first for helicopters, have stated that they are unable to supply them. They have shipped in some arms and ammunition from Singapore, however. Mrs. Bandaranaike yesterday told Ambassador Strausz-Hupé that the Soviets had offered to supply helicopters, but said she preferred US equipment because her air force was familiar with it.

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PAKISTAN

Reporting on the fighting continues to be fragmentary. [redacted]

[redacted] Comilla, east of Dacca, [redacted] the army met no resistance there, although some press reports had indicated that the army was hard pressed. [redacted]

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[redacted] "freedom fighters" in Jessore to the west are completely disorganized, but fight on out of fear that they will be killed if they give in. [redacted]

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PAKISTAN

President Yahya Khan's decision on 24 March to order the army into action in East Pakistan was the climax of a gradual slide into civil war--that in hindsight seems to have been preordained at the country's inception. The eastern and western sectors are separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory and were united only by faith in Islam. West Pakistanis traditionally have dominated the country's military forces and to a large degree its economy and government. East Pakistan, however, has had the major portion of the population and until recently has earned the bulk of Pakistan's foreign exchange. East Pakistani resentments have grown gradually over the past few years. They contributed to the agitation that brought down Ayub Khan, and in the past few months frustrated efforts to work out a constitution acceptable to both parts of the country.

When Yahya made his move, he had reached the view that the sort of solution Mujib demanded would make Pakistani unity all but fictional, greatly reduce the country's ability to support a military establishment and to defend itself from India, and encourage the breakup of West Pakistan into four separate countries.

The army hoped that the Bengalis--in its view an unmilitary race with little stomach for a fight--would give up in the face of quick and overwhelming military force. West Pakistani leaders are still hoping for a collapse of resistance, but if this were going to happen, it probably would have occurred by now.

The army's superior training and equipment, together with an ability--even though limited by the extent to which Ceylon will permit transit rights--to support and move troops by air, give it a clear edge in any direct engagement with the poorly armed and organized East Pakistanis.

the sheer magnitude of the problem of controlling a hostile land of 75 million people, however, will make the army's job extraordinarily difficult as long as the East Pakistanis have the will to fight. The resistance put up by the East Pakistanis to date has no doubt surprised the Westerners. They still appear to believe that additional troops can save the situation, but West Pakistan's estimates have been notably overoptimistic in the past two weeks.

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Pre-monsoon rains have already begun to fall, and by June--with the rains in full force, bridges destroyed, roads cut, and railroads torn up--ground transport will be next to impossible. The government is trying to get inland water transport going again, but its success will depend in large part on finding locals willing to carry army troops and supplies. The army's ability to supply its forces within the East by air is limited. Recent operations have already led to an aviation fuel shortage in Dacca. With the ports out of operation--primarily because dock workers have left for the countryside, with the Burmese refusing to supply more fuel, and with transportation from the ports to Dacca very difficult, the fuel shortage seems bound to get worse. It is unlikely, therefore, that government forces will be able to build up for extensive operations from outlying posts before the monsoon ends next fall.

The strain of the civil war on West Pakistani leaders is already exacting a toll. General Yaqub Khan, a moderate army figure who until recently was commander in the East, resigned last week. [REDACTED]

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As for the East, the Bengali forces--composed of a few mutinous infantry battalions from the regular army, paramilitary forces supported by ordinary police and villagers, many armed only with clubs and spears--now control the countryside and have isolated many army garrisons. The Easterners are talking as if their morale were fairly high, and they appear confident of ultimate success. Although Mujib and some other Awami League leaders were rounded up quickly, other leadership seems to have come to the fore to carry on the resistance.

In addition to their military weakness, the East Pakistanis may have to contend with severe food shortages and disease. With ports and transportation centers controlled by West Pakistanis, and the internal distribution system disrupted in any case, there is a good chance of famine in some areas. With health services also disrupted, cholera and other epidemics could erupt.

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An important factor in keeping Bengali resistance alive will be Indian support.

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Initially, the mere prospect of such Indian help may be more important as a stimulus to continued resistance than would be the physical support itself. A steady flow of Indian support would serve to keep the resistance alive indefinitely.

Meanwhile, the current military operation has strongly alienated the East Pakistanis, creating new psychological divisions between East and West greater than those before. The longer the fighting lasts the greater the damage will be to the economies of both wings. In East Pakistan the disruption of the transportation system, the expectation of a great drop-off in industrial production, and the difficulty of exporting jute--Pakistan's main money crop--will cripple an already marginal economy. In West Pakistan, the cost of the military operation and the loss of foreign exchange earned by East Pakistani exports will be difficult to handle.

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